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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VATICAN 000215

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR EUR/WE (MENNUTI); DRL/IRF (FARR); EAP/CM

BEIJING ALSO PASS CHENGDU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/15/2013

TAGS: CH PREL PREL VT VTCH

SUBJECT: HOLY SEE AND THE PRC, TIME FOR RECONCILIATION?

REF: E-MAIL FARR/HARDT 01/14/03

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR R.J. NICHOLSON FOR REASONS 1.5 (B),(D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: THE HOLY SEE IS "HAPPY TO HEAR THE GOOD NEWS" (REF) THAT PRC OFFICIALS ARE WAITING FOR A 'GESTURE' FROM THE VATICAN IN ORDER TO RESUME DIALOG ABOUT NORMALIZING

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RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS. THE HOLY SEE WILL USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO "TEST" WHETHER THE NEW PRC GOVERNMENT WILL BE MORE FLEXIBLE AND WILLING TO ENGAGE THAN WAS THE PREVIOUS LEADERSHIP. THE HOLY SEE INTENDS TO VERIFY THE "AVAILABILITY" OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT BY APPROACHING THE PRC EMBASSY TO ITALY. MFA DIRECTOR FOR CHINA AFFAIRS, MSGR. ROTA-GRAZIOSI, TOLD POLOFF THAT THE HOLY SEE IS READY TO FIND SOLUTIONS TO THE THREE MAIN OBSTACLES BLOCKING NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS, BUT THAT THE PRC MUST ENGAGE IN DIALOG IN ORDER TO REACH AN AGREEMENT. ROTA-GRAZIOSI IDENTIFIED THE THREE OBSTACLES AS AUTONOMY OF THE CHURCH IN CHINA, DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE HOLY SEE AND TAIWAN, AND PRC ACCEPTANCE OF THE POPE'S RECOGNITION OF PAST MISTAKES. END SUMMARY.

CHURCH AUTONOMY AND NORMALIZATION

12. (C) ASSESSING THE OBSTACLES TO NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE HOLY SEE AND CHINA, HOLY SEE MFA CHINA DIRECTOR MSGR. ROTA-GRAZIOSI SAID THAT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN CHINA "MUST BE AUTONOMOUS, BUT COULD NOT BE INDEPENDENT" FROM THE HOLY SEE. HE GAVE THE EXAMPLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE U.S., WHICH WAS SELF-GOVERNING BUT ACCEPTED GUIDANCE AND INTERVENTION FROM THE POPE. HE SEES THE CHURCH EVENTUALLY FUNCTIONING ROUGHLY IN THE SAME MANNER IN CHINA, EXCEPT WITH THE ADDITIONAL LAYER OF GOVERNMENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ORDINATIONS AND OTHER PAPAL DECISIONS. HE POINTED OUT THAT GOVERNMENTS IN EUROPE AND VIETNAM ARE INVOLVED IN THE ORDINATION PROCESS, WHICH THE CHURCH ACCEPTS

-- UP TO A POINT.

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RECONCILING THE TWO CHURCHES

13. (C) THE HOLY SEE BELIEVES THAT RECONCILING THE UNDERGROUND AND OFFICIAL BISHOPS IN CHINA WILL BE A "DELICATE" AND "IMPORTANT" MATTER. THE HOLY SEE IS PREPARED TO REVIEW WITH THE PRC THE STATUS OF EACH BISHOP, WHETHER FROM THE UNDERGROUND OR OFFICIAL CHURCH, ON A CASE BY CASE BASIS. THE HOLY SEE POSITION IS THAT ALL BISHOPS AND PRIESTS IN CHINA ARE VALID AND MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH (AND CAN ADMINISTER THE SACRAMENTS) BUT ONLY THOSE ORDAINED BY THE POPE ARE LEGITIMATE CATHOLIC PRIESTS. THE HOLY SEE IS AWARE OF THE PRC'S CONCERN ABOUT THE ROLE BEIJING BISHOP FU TIESHAN WILL PLAY IN THE FUTURE CHURCH. ROTA-GRAZIOSI SAID THAT BISHOP FU WAS A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH, HOWEVER, THE IDEA THAT BISHOP FU WOULD BE PROMOTED TO A CARDINAL TO FACILITATE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WAS "NONSENSE." "THE APPOINTMENT OF CARDINALS IS A PERSONAL CHOICE OF THE POPE."

RELATIONS WITH TAIWAN

14. (C) ROTA-GRAZIOSI SAID THAT IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT THE HOLY SEE IS "WILLING TO CUT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH TAIWAN" AND ESTABLISH THEM WITH BEIJING. EVEN THOUGH THIS ACTION WOULD BE "HUMILIATING" TO TAIWAN, THE HOLY SEE IS "PREPARED TO PAY THAT PRICE" IN ORDER TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH THE PRC. HE SAID THAT "WHILE THE HOLY FATHER HAS TO THINK OF THE

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300,000 CATHOLICS IN TAIWAN HE MUST ALSO CONSIDER THE 10 MILLION CATHOLICS IN MAINLAND CHINA AND HIS PASTORAL DUTIES TO THEM". WHEN ASKED IF THE HOLY SEE WOULD ALLOW SOME TIME TO PASS BETWEEN CUTTING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH TAIWAN AND

ESTABLISHING THEM WITH THE PRC, ROTA-GRAZIOSI SAID THAT WAS A TOPIC THAT WOULD HAVE TO BE RESOLVED THROUGH DIALOG. THE HOLY SEE IS NOT WILLING TO CUT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AS A STEP TOWARD NORMALIZED RELATIONS BUT RATHER AS PART OF A PACKAGE OF "CONCESSIONS WHICH MUST BE MADE" THAT WILL GUARANTEE NORMALIZED RELATIONS.

PAPAL APOLOGY NOT IN THE CARDS

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ACTION EUR-00

INFO LOG-00 NP-00 AIT-03 AMAD-00 CIAE-00 INL-00 DODE-00
DS-00 EAP-00 VC-00 TEDE-00 INR-00 LAB-01 VCE-00
NSAE-00 SS-00 DSCE-00 PRM-00 DRL-02 NFAT-00 SAS-00
SWCI-00 /006W ----- 2752DB 171351Z /38

R 171322Z JAN 03
FM AMEMBASSY VATICAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIJING
AMEMBASSY HANOI
AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMCONSUL SHANGHAI
AMCONSUL SHENYANG
AIT TAIPEI

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15. (C) ROTA-GRAZIOSI SAID THAT THE POPE WOULD NEVER SPECIFICALLY APOLOGIZE FOR THE OCTOBER 2000 CANONIZATION OF CHINESE MARTYRS. HE BELIEVES THAT THE PRC USES THIS AS AN EXCUSE TO PREVENT PROGRESS. HE SAID THAT THIS WAS ANOTHER ISSUE THAT COULD BE SETTLED WITH DIALOG.

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COMMENT

16. (C) ROTA-GRAZIOSI HAS ALWAYS BEEN SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE PRC'S WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE THE HOLY SEE IN DIRECT DIALOG AND MAKE CHANGES WITHIN CHINA OUTSIDE OF THE ECONOMIC ARENA. HE WAS SURPRISED TO HEAR FROM US PER REF EMAIL THAT THE PRC WAS WAITING FOR A "GESTURE" FROM THE HOLY SEE. HE SAID THAT THE HOLY SEE WOULD "VERIFY THE AVAILABILITY" OF THE PRC EMBASSY TO ITALY AND ADVISE EMBASSY OF THE RESULTS. THE POPE BELIEVES HIS APOLOGY IN OCTOBER 2001 FOR THE EXCESSES OF THE CHURCH IN CHINA HAS LARGELY ADDRESSED CHINESE CONCERNS ABOUT THE PAST.
END COMMENT.
NICHOLSON

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